

# Fit to Travel

## The Exchange Programme of the Belgian American Educational Foundation: An Institutional Perspective on Scientific Persona Formation (1920-1940)<sup>1</sup>

PIETER HUISTRA AND KAAAT WILS

In this article we propose an institutional perspective on persona formation. Not unlike individual scientists, institutions such as funding bodies took an active interest in shaping the scientific persona. As a case in point, we discuss the Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF) that sent hundreds of aspiring Belgian scientists to the United States during the Interwar Period. The BAEF went to great lengths to optimise its selection procedure and formulated conditions pertaining to both the mental and physical fitness of its grantees. In this way, the BAEF cut off some repertoires of being a scientist and encouraged its fellows to demonstrate certain qualities when in front of the funding body. This, we argue, points to the performative and 'occasional' character of scientific personae.

*Geschied om te reizen. Het uitwisselingsprogramma van de Belgian American Education Foundation. Een institutioneel perspectief op de vorming van wetenschappelijke personae (1920-1940)*

In dit artikel benaderen wij de vorming van personae vanuit een institutioneel perspectief. Net als individuele wetenschappers zijn instituties zoals *funding bodies* actief betrokken bij het scheppen en instandhouden van wetenschappelijke personae. Als voorbeeld hiervan bespreken wij de Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF). In het Interbellum zond de BAEF honderden wetenschappers-in-wording naar de Verenigde Staten. Daarbij getroostte de organisatie zich veel moeite om de selectieprocedure te optimaliseren en stelde zij voorwaarden aan zowel de mentale als fysieke conditie van haar fellows. De BAEF maakte hiermee sommige repertoires van het wetenschapper-zijn onmogelijk, terwijl zij haar

fellows aanmoedigde om bepaalde andere kwaliteiten voor het voetlicht te brengen voor de ogen van de *funding body*. Dit toont aan, zo betogen wij, dat de wetenschappelijke persona gesitueerd en performatief is.

## Introduction

Scientific personae, according to Lorraine Daston and Otto Sibum in their seminal text on the subject, are situated somewhere between the individual and the institutional. They are formative of both the individual scientist – ‘in body and mind’ – and the discipline to which they belong. A persona is something that enables the existence of both individual scientists – who have to perform and enact the persona to be recognised as a scientist – and scientific collectives – of which the members are recognisable through their shared persona. In this sense personae are very ‘real’.<sup>2</sup>

The question is: how can these entities be studied? Personae need people of flesh and blood to become visible. Therefore case studies of individual scientists offer an obvious entryway to the investigation of scientific personae. This approach was also encouraged by Daston and Sibum, who at the same time urged historians to behave not as ‘biographers’ looking for the lives of individuals, but rather as ‘botanists’ looking beyond the merely individual for ‘species’. As several contributions to their edited volume on scientific personae make clear, following an individual or a group of interconnected scientists can offer an insight into the ways scientific identities are carved out and new ‘species’ can come into being.<sup>3</sup>

Individual scientists are not the only actors involved in the creation and upkeep of scientific personae. Herman Paul has recognised the role played by ‘scholarly reward systems’ as they are installed by universities and other ‘(institutional) contexts’: such contexts are forms of ‘external pressure’ that direct the individual scholar’s desires, which in turn are decisive in scientific persona formation.<sup>4</sup> In this article we want to take this argument one step further by looking at scientific persona formation from the perspective of the funding body, an institution of increasing importance in the

1 This article is a result of the research project Scientific Personae in Cultural Encounters in Twentieth-Century Europe (SPICE). Funding was generously provided by the Wallenberg Foundation.

2 Lorraine Daston and Otto H. Sibum, ‘Introduction: Scientific Personae and Their Histories’, *Science in Context* 16:1-2 (2003) 1-8, 2 DOI 10.1017/S026988970300067X.

3 A classic example, although not named as an investigation into persona formation, is Steven

Shapin’s chapter on ‘Who was Robert Boyle?: The Creation and Presentation of an Experimental Identity’: Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago, London 1994) 126-192.

4 Herman Paul, ‘What Is a Scholarly Persona?: Ten Theses on Virtues, Skills and Desires’, *History and Theory* 53:3 (2014) 348-371, 367-369 DOI 10.1111/hith.10717.

twentieth-century scientific landscape that introduced new scholarly reward systems. Funding bodies, we hold, had desires of their own, and actively and deliberately shaped ideal types of being a scientist. At the same time, funding bodies were stages on which scientists had to enact and literally embody these ideal types – thus pointing out the performative nature of scientific personae.

The case we present here is that of the Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF) in the first twenty years of its existence, from 1920 to 1940. The BAEF was decisive in installing two aspects of scientific practice that became commonplace in the twentieth century – receiving funding from a funding body and travelling to the United States. First we will place the BAEF in the rapidly changing scientific landscape of the Interwar Years. The BAEF, we will argue, was very self-aware of playing an active role in the formation of scientists. Its selection procedure ultimately led to the cutting off of old personae and the promotion of a new one – that of the scientist as an ambassador. Finally we argue that the instance of the BAEF tells us much about the ‘occasional’ nature and performative character of personae.

### The rise of funding bodies

In this article we refer to the Belgian American Educational Foundation – founded in 1920 – as BAEF, but until 1938 it went under a different name that referred to its wartime origins: the Commission for Relief in Belgium Educational Foundation. After the Great War the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), which had provided humanitarian aid in occupied territory, disposed of a large amount of its remaining funds. The two leaders of the relief programme, Herbert Hoover, later the American president, and the Belgian banker, entrepreneur, former military man and future minister Emile Francqui, secured the remaining relief money – which in fact stemmed in large part from the Belgian government and the wartime National Committee for Relief and Food – and destined it for the development of higher education in Belgium. As Kenneth Bertrams has indicated in a recent article on the early institutional history of the BAEF, the specific form of the initiative corresponded to the partly diverging goals and ideals of both self-made men.<sup>5</sup> An amount of 95 million Belgian francs was donated directly to the four Belgian universities and other institutes of higher learning. In addition to that, two closely intertwined foundations were set up, each of which reflected the ambitions of their respective chairmen in outlook, activities and personnel. Francqui led the Brussels based University Foundation, which was

5 Kenneth Bertrams, ‘The Domestic Uses of Belgian-American “Mutual Understanding”: The Commission for Relief in Belgium

Educational Foundation, 1920-1940’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 13:4 (2015) 326-343  
DOI 10.1080/14794012.2015.1088325.

specifically geared towards the internal improvement of Belgium's lagging higher education system. Hoover was 'chief' of the BAEF, which had offices in both New York and Brussels. The daily business of the BAEF was managed by what Hoover called 'former C.R.B. men' such as Hallam Tuck and Millard Shaler, who ran the Brussels office and were engineers as was Hoover. The New York office was run by Perrin Galpin, who had volunteered for relief work in Belgium when he had been an exchange student at Oxford.<sup>6</sup> Both foundations possessed substantial funds that allowed them to stimulate higher education and research in different ways. The University Foundation awarded subsidies to scientific societies and publications, and supported the democratisation of university education by setting up a system of student study loans. Its objectives were national: Francqui believed that scientific development would be beneficial to Belgium. In this sense, both the BAEF and the University Foundation were a continuation of wartime relief, enabling the 'young people of small fortune but great talent' to enrol in higher education was not unlike the food distribution during the First World War, when only those who were well-off had to pay for the food distributed.<sup>7</sup>

The goals of the BAEF extended beyond the post-war reconstruction of Belgium, they involved the interest of the United States as well. Hoover designed 'his' foundation 'to build a permanent bridge of fine and high relationship' between Belgium and the United States. The most important instrument to achieve this goal of friendship between the two countries were the BAEF fellowships, an exchange programme of Belgian and American students and scientists that was meant to be 'a memorial to American relief activities during the war' and was to continue the friendships between Belgians and Americans that had begun during the war.<sup>8</sup> These ambitions were idiosyncratic in their reference to the war, yet at the same time they echoed – albeit in a specific, bi-national form – the internationalist ideals of transnational movements and associations of which Belgium saw so many in the early twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> The BAEF's initiatives were also inspired by other private foundations that offered travel fellowships, such as the small scale French Kahn foundation that had organised 'Around-the-World travel scholarships' since 1898 and the prestigious Rhodes Scholarships (1902) that allowed students from the British colonies, Germany and the United States,

6 Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure 1874-1920* (London 1952) 235.

7 The quotation is from Francqui, in: Kenneth Bertrams, 'De l'action humanitaire à la recherche scientifique: La Commission for Relief in Belgium et la création du Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique en Belgique, 1914-1930', in: Ludovic Tournès (ed.), *L'argent de l'influence: Les fondations*

*américaines et leurs réseaux européens* (Paris 2010) 45-63, 57.

8 C.R.B. Educational Foundation, Inc. *Annual Report for 1920* (New York, s.d.) 18, 19. Subsequent reference: *Annual Report* [year].

9 Daniel Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880-1930: Peace, Progress and Prestige* (Manchester 2013).

such as Hoover's aide Galpin, to study at Oxford.<sup>10</sup> The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1910) and the Rockefeller Foundation (1913) too, developed large scale transnational fellowship and travel programmes.<sup>11</sup> Just as his compatriots Rockefeller and Carnegie, Hoover was convinced of the beneficial effect of both science and travel; it was no coincidence that in his inaugural address in 1929 – under the heading 'World Peace' – he stated approvingly that 'our people seek a larger vision through art, literature, science, and travel'.<sup>12</sup>

Both the Carnegie Endowment and the Rockefeller Foundation were also actively involved in the reconstruction and institutional development of Belgian universities.<sup>13</sup> With their support to foreign institutions and their extensive fellowship programmes, they were important actors in Interwar American cultural diplomacy.<sup>14</sup> On a smaller scale, this was equally true for the BAEF. The fellowship was its core activity, but the BAEF also took part in the development of Belgian universities. The Louvain library was a case in point. Demolished by the German invaders in 1914, it had been an American initiative to rebuild it. When the project was halted during the 1920s and American prestige was at stake, it was Hoover who managed to secure the remaining funds, largely from the BAEF.<sup>15</sup> Another building project in which the BAEF took an active interest was the new Solbosch campus of Brussels University: the BAEF followed closely the progress of the campus and brought Brussels' University officials to the United States to visit American campuses. The fact that in his memoirs Hoover remembered his active involvement in bringing Brussels' officials to America and referred to the new campus as possessing 'the regular American equipment', suggests that the BAEF actively pursued a kind of Americanisation of Belgian higher education.<sup>16</sup>

10 On the Kahn travel programme, see Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970* (Stanford 2010) 39-61. On the Rhodes scholarships as a source of inspiration: Bertrams, 'De l'action humanitaire', 58.

11 Literature on the role of the Rockefeller Foundation in the development of the social and medical sciences abroad is abundant. See e.g. Ludovic Tournès, 'La fondation Rockefeller et la construction d'une politique des sciences sociales en France (1918-1940)', *Annales: Histoire, sciences sociales* 63:6 (2008) 1371-1402.

12 Herbert Hoover, *Inaugural Address*, 4 March 1929, <https://hoover.archives.gov/info/inauguralspeech.html> (10 June 2016).

13 The Rockefeller Foundation had also funded the CRB in 1914, and funded the new Brussels Medical School after the war; the Carnegie Endowment contributed to the financing of the new Leuven library. See Kenneth Bertrams, 'De l'action humanitaire', and Tammy M. Proctor, 'The Louvain Library and us Ambition in Interwar Belgium', *Journal of Contemporary History* 50:2 (2015) 147-167 DOI 10.1177/0022009414552867.

14 See Katharina Rietzler, 'Before the Cultural Cold Wars: American Philanthropy and Cultural Diplomacy in the Interwar Years', *Historical Research* 84:223 (2011) 148-164 DOI 10.1111/j.1468-2281.2010.00548.x.

15 Proctor, 'The Louvain Library', 11-12.

16 Hoover, *The Memoirs*, 230.

It was an ‘American spirit’ too, that was discernible in a new type of organisation that changed the Belgian scientific landscape in the 1920s – the funding body.<sup>17</sup> The University Foundation, the BAEF and the National Fund for Scientific Research (*Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique*, FNRS, founded in 1928) introduced competitive systems of acquiring research funds, just as the American foundations of industrialists and philanthropists Rockefeller and Carnegie had done since the turn of the century. Of course, research funding was not entirely new: there had been national academies, government departments and smaller funds that had given travel grants or research money to scientists, but these new organisations redefined the systems of scientific patronage through their scale and approach – more scientists could benefit from larger grants, given by larger organisations that standardised and bureaucratised grant application processes.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas the Rockefellers and Carnegies invested their own money, this was not the case with the BAEF: it was neither Hoover nor Francqui’s personal fortune, but the remaining relief money that made up its funds.<sup>19</sup> The BAEF was a private organisation, not tied to either the Belgian or the American government. The FNRS too, was a private foundation that had close ties with the monarchy.<sup>20</sup> Following a speech by King Albert at the Cockerill factory in Seraing in 1927, in which the king stressed the importance of science for Belgian prosperity, Francqui launched the initiative for the FNRS. He managed to secure funds from the Belgian industrial and financial elite for what would become Belgium’s most important institution for the advancement of science. The FNRS – managed by Francqui’s confidant Jean Willems – introduced several types of academic research funding, particularly for junior scientists, which could be obtained on successful application. Belgian universities evolved from institutes of higher education into research centres where young scientists were paid to do research.<sup>21</sup>

Funding bodies such as the University Foundation, the BAEF and the FNRS introduced new aspects of scientific life such as competition for research

17 Bertrams, ‘De l’action humanitaire’, 63.

18 Robert E. Kohler, *Partners in Science: Foundations and Natural Scientists 1900-1945* (Chicago, London 1991) 7-11, 396-397. Kohler notes funding bodies as part of the ‘organization synthesis’, albeit with a remarkable ‘personal touch’.

19 Stanley Coben, ‘Foundation Officials and Fellowships: Innovation in the Patronage of Science’, *Minerva* 44:2 (1976) 225-240.

20 Pascal Pirot, *La Dynastie Belge et La Science, 1909-1959* (PhD thesis; Liège 2015) 57, 231.

21 Kenneth Bertrams, ‘De l’initiative privée à la reconversion publique du ‘système francquiste’: Le F.N.R.S. et la coordination de la recherche scientifique en Belgique (1914-1950)’, in: Kenneth Bertrams et al. (eds.), *Pour une histoire de la politique scientifique en Europe (xix<sup>ème</sup>-xx<sup>ème</sup> siècles)* (Brussels 2007) 51-75; Geert Vanpaemel, ‘To be or not to be: Belgian Science Policy in the Interwar Period’, in: A. Dos Santos Fitas et al. (eds.), *A Junta de Educação Nacional e a Investigação Científica em Portugal no Período entre Guerras* (Casal de Cambra 2013) 33-48.

funding and inaugurated new scientific practices such as writing of grant applications and reporting to a funding body. Two of these aspects of scientific practice that have become commonplace in the course of the twentieth century were first promoted in Belgium by the BAEF. First, travelling to America became part of a scientific career. Not the travel itself was new – the Belgian government had offered fellowships for recently graduated students with the highest exam marks since 1835 – but during the BAEF's lifetime the United States replaced Germany as the main scientific reference culture.<sup>22</sup> And young Belgian scientists went in large numbers: by 1940 471 fellows had already received a fellowship. These included professors and advanced scientists ('advanced fellows') who stayed a few months at an American university, but the bulk of those going abroad were the so-called 'graduate fellows'. They were young scientists who had just finished their studies and stayed for a full year, with the possibility of a renewal. Originally planned to be of the same number, the flow of American scholars and scientists going the other way turned out to be a lot smaller, mainly due to a lack of interest.<sup>23</sup> From a Belgian academic perspective, the exchange programme however was quite successful: in 1940 around twenty percent of the Belgian faculty had travelled to America with BAEF money.<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, the BAEF introduced 'fundability' as a distinctive quality for a scientist. Robert Kohler concluded for the United States that 'by 1940 grant-getting was an essential skill for making academic careers in most disciplines'.<sup>25</sup> Something similar is true for Belgium, and the BAEF played a large part in it. Scientists who had visited America with money from the BAEF had not only made a scientific grand tour, they also displayed fundability: they had successfully completed an application procedure and obtained a grant, which made them recognisable as good scientists. The number of fellows who passed through the BAEF (or the FNRS) suggests the importance of having been funded for a scientist, as does the change the BAEF made in its application procedure in 1925. Before, only those who 'do not dispose of sufficient resources to be able to sojourn during a year in the US' had been eligible.<sup>26</sup> The new rule did not exclude any candidates, implying that it was not just about travelling to America, but also about obtaining the funding for it, even when scientists did not need the financial support. This change in the funding policy points to changing views regarding the relationship between scientists and money, a transition that Steven Shapin has described as the transition from science as a calling to science as a job. For centuries

22 On the Belgian travel fellowships since 1835: Pieter Dhondt, *Un double compromis: Enjeux et débats relatifs à l'enseignement universitaire en Belgique au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Ghent 2011) 249–256.

23 Bertrams, 'The Domestic Uses', 333.

24 Emile Boulpaep, *Belgian American Educational Foundation, Inc.* (s.l. 1995) 16.

25 Kohler, *Partners in Science*, 395.

26 *Annual Report 1925*, 27.

scientists who received no remuneration for their labour had been considered to be morally or epistemologically superior, but in the twentieth century they became ‘amateurs’, an epithet with all kinds of negative connotations.<sup>27</sup>

### A longing for control

The stay in America was designed to be a formative experience that should shape the fellows both scientifically and politically. The BAEF wanted its grantees to immerse themselves in American (scientific) life. Upon their return, they should make use of their newly gained ‘knowledge in scientific research, teaching or other service for the benefit of Belgium’ and perpetuate the friendly ties between Belgium and the United States.<sup>28</sup> To ensure that the grantees would amply reflect on their American experience and to make information available to the officials of the BAEF and future fellows, all graduate and advanced fellows had to write a report on their stay in the United States. These reports show an encounter of the young Belgian scientists with a distinct and unknown scientific culture and organisation, albeit in a very standardised way.

Each report – as prescribed by the BAEF – discussed successively the academic environment, the work the fellow had undertaken and the stay more generally. The fellows described the courses they had taken, the papers they had written, as well as the facilities of the American universities; the modern equipment of laboratories and well-organised library collections deeply impressed most of them. The way scientists behaved and interacted was also something of a culture shock for the Belgians. The democratic and collaborative atmosphere at the physiology lab of Harvard Medical School was remarked by several fellows.<sup>29</sup> The young economist Marc Somerhausen – in a radio talk and thus for a larger audience – portrayed his professor as a self-made man, who was cleaning his Ford in his garage when they first met.<sup>30</sup> An egalitarian society, the self-made man as a role model – together with other stereotypes such as the skyscraper, the love of speed and the role of physical education – these were returning images of American culture in general. As with so many forms of travel writing, the fellows’ observations were strongly mediated by existing images and clichés of American society.<sup>31</sup>

27 Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Life: A Moral History of a Late Modern Vocation* (Chicago 2008) 21–46.

28 Archives of the Belgian American Educational Foundation, Brussels (hereafter ABAEF), box ‘Belgian Graduate Fellows (BCF) 1924–1925 1925–1926’, General Information for Belgian C.R.B. Fellows, New York Office, 15 July 1924 (hereafter General Information). All original quotes in French have been translated into English by the authors.

29 For example: Albert Brachet, ‘En Amerique’, *Bulletin du Cercle des Alumni de la Fondation Universitaire* 1:1 (1929–1930) 4–10. Subsequent reference: *Bulletin du Cercle*.

30 Marc Somerhausen, ‘Lieux communs sur les Etats-Unis’, *Bulletin du Cercle* 3:2 (1931) 109–114, 109.

31 Bertrams, ‘The Domestic Uses’, 336.



As has been indicated by Whitney Walton in a study on educational travellers to and from the United States, reports written by the fellows testify to an experience whereby students compared and contrasted their own and another nation's values and practices, confronted various preconceptions and national stereotypes, and articulated strengths and weaknesses of both countries, resulting in a revised sense of patriotism with an internationalist touch to it.<sup>32</sup>

The reports of the BAEF fellows were scripted by existing images of America that were disseminated amongst others through previous fellows' reports and the funding body's expectations. The appreciation of the fellowships was cast in an almost hyperbolic tone and the gratitude expressed to the BAEF suggests that most writers of these reports kept their audience in mind. This was true even for those fellows who explicitly stated they had refrained from any prejudice and wanted to keep far from existing clichés.<sup>33</sup> The biochemist Marcel Florkin announced he wanted to do away with the stereotypes of America – both good and bad – and he and several other fellows explicitly stressed their 'open-minded' attitude.<sup>34</sup> Yet even this unprejudiced look on America was prescribed, since the BAEF advised each fellow to try to understand America 'and later to interpret it to his countrymen'. For this, the BAEF recommended a specific attitude: 'Look about you with an open mind and your year in America will be more interesting, enjoyable and profitable.'<sup>35</sup>

That these travel reports were tainted by cultural stereotypes and demands by the BAEF does not mean that contact with American scientific culture did not change the way science was done in Belgium. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that the travels funded by the BAEF had a more lasting influence and caused some degree of Americanisation of scientists' behaviour. Florkin for example, had encountered an 'amicable atmosphere' in the United States, which he tried to recreate throughout his career.<sup>36</sup> However, it is not the individual experience that interests us here, but the standardised way in which it was articulated. The fact that the BAEF gave fairly clear instructions about when (every half year) and how (in fixed categories, preferably typewritten) the American academic experience had to be summed up is illustrative of its desire for control over its fellows. Its stands in sharp contrast to the ways in which the Belgian government had dealt with travel reports in its own travel programme. After decades of neglect on the part of

32 Whitney Walton, 'Internationalism, Travel Writing, and Franco-American Educational Travel, 1898-1939', in: Thomas Adam and Nils Roemer (eds.), *Crossing the Atlantic: Travel and Travel Writing in Modern Times* (Arlington 2011) 58.

33 Bertrams, 'The Domestic Uses', 336.

34 ABAEF, *Preliminary Reports of Belgian Fellows in America (hereafter PR)* 1929-1930, 'Preliminary

Report Marcel Florkin'. Similar remarks in the reports by Simone Buisset and Marguerite Van Hauwaert.

35 ABAEF, BGF 1924-1925, General Information.

36 Corinne Godefroid et al., *Marcel Florkin 1900-1979: Le savant, l'humaniste, l'homme engagé* (Stavelot 2002) 19.

the fellows, it had been decided in 1882 that the last quarter of the two year fellowships would only be paid out on receipt of a report, and even then, some fellows chose not to write one.<sup>37</sup>

The BAEF kept an eye on its fellows, not only during, but also before and after the fellowship. This started with a standardised application form that each candidate had to complete and attach a photograph to. Once selected, the prospective fellows came into intensive postal contact with the BAEF office in Brussels, which took care of many things: the boat trip with Red Star Line from Antwerp, the first nights of the stay in Hotel Pennsylvania in New York, further travel arrangements and housing for female fellows in the United States – even the final decision on which university the fellow should attend. All the correspondence between the fellows and the BAEF was meticulously recorded; a file for each fellow is still kept in the possession of the BAEF in Brussels today. These files extend beyond the duration of the fellowship because the BAEF did not lose interest in its grantees. Congratulations were sent, as in the case of Corneille Heymans, who won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1938, as well as condolences.<sup>38</sup> The family of Alice Scouvert, who died in 1932, received a letter from the BAEF, who had experienced ‘her intellectual and moral qualities’ and understood how great the loss must be.<sup>39</sup>

The applications, the reports and the well-maintained correspondence – the control or surveillance of the fellows – resulted from the BAEF’s desire to make its programme work. The stay in America was only the first step along the way. Of course it was only after the American journeys that the fellowships would begin to bear fruit. Both founders of the BAEF thought that the fellowship programme should result in the formation of an elite. Hoover’s first concern was to build up ‘a great body of influential men and women’ that would be friendly towards America.<sup>40</sup> This ambition seemed well on the way to be achieved during the Interwar Years. When in 1945 the American senator William Fulbright initiated what would become the large scale Fulbright exchange programme, he had in mind two funds that in his opinion had proved that educational exchange could affect the attitudes of its participants toward foreign nations. The BAEF was one of them.<sup>41</sup> Francqui in turn, also favoured the formation of an elite, primarily with an eye to the economic development of the country, but also with a broader

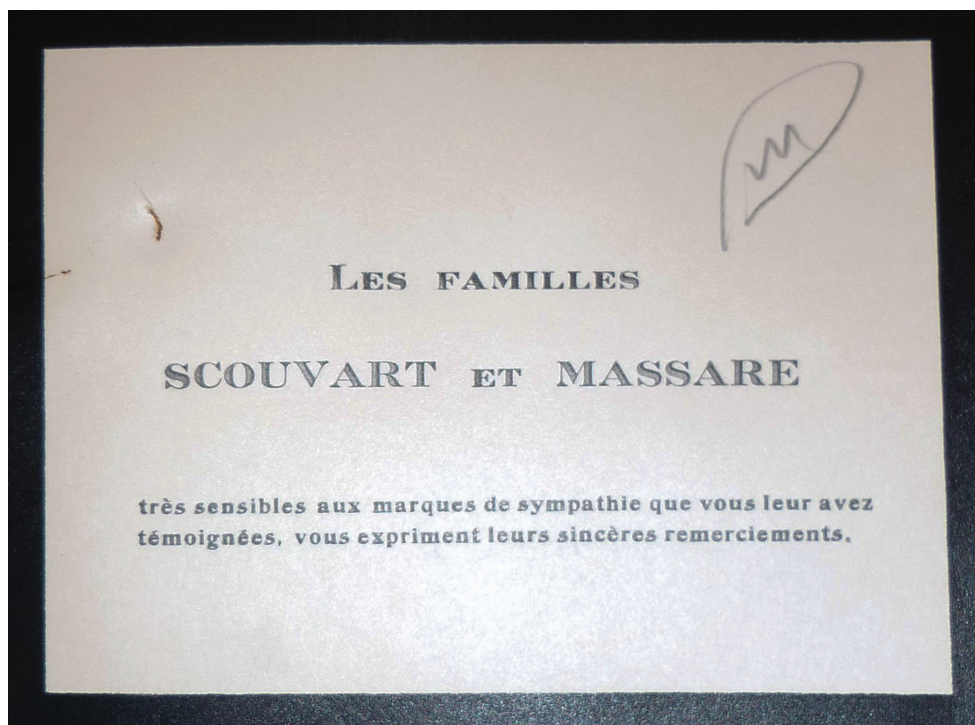
37 Dhondt, *Un double compromis*, 254–258.

38 ABAEF, box ‘Regular and Advanced Fellows, 1927–1928 A à G’, file ‘Heymans, Corneille Advanced Fellows 1927–1928’.

39 ABAEF, BGF 1921–1922, file ‘Scouvert’, W.H. Tuck and M.K. Shaler to Mr. and Mrs. Scouvert, Brussels, 29 November 1932.

40 *Annual Report 1937*, 13.

41 This was at least what Fulbright recalled in 1986. In 1945, he had been cautious to avoid idealistic justifications for the bill such as mutual understanding: Ralph H. Vogel, ‘The Making of the Fulbright Program’, *The Annales of the*



The BAEF followed its fellows sometimes very actively for a long period. This note thanking the BAEF for its condolences, found in the file of former fellow Alice Scouart, provides evidence of this.

Brussels, Archives of the Belgian American Educational Foundation, box 'Belgian Graduate Fellows 1921-1922', file 'Scouart'.

Photo Pieter Huistra.

societal interest: the members of this elite should overcome internal Belgian differences.<sup>42</sup> This process of elite creation was formalised by the foundation of the *Cercle des Alumni de la Fondation Universitaire*. At first, membership of the *Cercle* was restricted to those who had travelled through the University Foundation or the BAEF, but later it became open to all who had received any kind of funding from these institutions. Its *Bulletin* reads as a realisation of Hoover and Francqui's ideals. It contained travel reports from fellows who had visited America, as well as announcements for social events such as lectures and suppers, and even a system of mutual solidarity with those who could not readily find a job, both in terms of job opportunities and finance. In the 1930s the *Cercle* evolved into something of a lobby group for higher education, with articles and a theme issue of the *Bulletin* on the difficult situation caused by budget cuts in Belgian higher education.<sup>43</sup>

From 1932 onwards, every issue of the *Bulletin* carried a quotation of Francqui as its motto. It described the *Cercle* as a grouping of academicians who did not discriminate on the basis of belief, opinion, language or alma mater – even though the University Foundation in reality was particularly close to the French speaking, liberal circles around Brussels University.<sup>44</sup> The members of the *Cercle* were said to form a 'core group of several hundred men who are profoundly convinced of the value of the principles of tolerance and objectivity, and of a collective and national spirit'.<sup>45</sup> The *Cercle* made itself known as a Belgian elite, possessing the qualities needed in religiously and linguistically divided Belgium. Many members of this elite drew on the shared experience of a stay in the United States. This was illustrated by the observation made by the American mechanical engineer Jacob Pieter den Hartog, who was a BAEF visiting professor in Belgium in 1939. He reported to the funding body about his encounters with Belgian faculty members that were very familiar with American science; these BAEF fellows, according to him, formed a 'well-coordinated group that is having a profound influence on University life'.<sup>46</sup>

What the example of the *Cercle* shows is that at the end of the Interwar period a scientific elite was being formed, of which a great number had obtained funding for travel from the BAEF. This of course was not a creation from nothing. As Bertrams pointed out, the choices of the BAEF probably largely meant a reproduction of elites already in place.<sup>47</sup> The BAEF, it seems, created winners but it did so by picking those destined to win.

American Academy of Political and Social Science  
491 (1987) 11–21, 12; Walton, *Internationalism*, 117.

42 Cf. Bertrams, 'The Domestic Uses', 332.

Bertrams stresses Francqui's economic ambitions, but he does not take into account the *Cercle des Alumni de la Fondation Universitaire*.

43 *Bulletin du Cercle* 7: 'Numéro special, Novembre 1935' (1935–1936).

44 Bertrams, 'De l'initiative privée', 58.

45 *Bulletin du Cercle* 3:1 (1932–1933).

46 Quoted in: Bertrams, 'The Domestic Uses', 339.

47 *Ibid.*, 338–339.

## Selecting the selectors

The selection procedure troubled the BAEF almost from its inception, since it was important to select the right fellow and not to waste money or effort. Hoover and his associates all had a background in the corporate world and they showed something of a businesslike approach towards science. The governmental structure of the BAEF with a President and a Chairman of the Board of the Directors – both functions were occupied by Hoover – deliberately reflected that of commercial bodies.<sup>48</sup> The annual reports reserved ample space for the accountancy report of the Foundation; the BAEF presented itself as a corporation that obtained value for money and wanted to be held accountable for it.

Anxieties about the selection procedure were reinforced by information about the fellows that the BAEF gathered in the first years of its existence. Apart from the standardised semi-annual reporting by the fellows, the BAEF had various other forms of surveillance at its disposal. There were letters written by American professors that gave information about the progress of the fellows. When the possible prolongation of a fellowship was at stake, these letters often were very laudatory.<sup>49</sup> There were also problematic cases like Gaston Dekimpe, graduate fellow in 1921-1922. The chairman of the Committee on Advanced Degrees of MIT wrote quite negatively about him, which led the BAEF officials to conclude that ‘his work is not up to standard of the other fellows’.<sup>50</sup> One of Dekimpe’s problems seems to have been his command of English, as he hinted at in his report.

The BAEF also received unsolicited advice, such as an extensive letter from the graduate fellow Ivan Lambrette. According to Lambrette, the BAEF’s selection procedure did not yield the right results, as he had already noticed on the boat to New York. Not only ‘academic performances’ should be important, but also knowledge of English and the ‘maturity of the Fellow’. What the BAEF needed, Lambrette concluded from his own experience, was more applications and a better selection committee.<sup>51</sup> In New York the secretary of the BAEF and former aide of Hoover, Perrin Galpin, took notice of the letter and forwarded it to the Brussels office. He started to gather extra information, from the official reports written by the fellows, but also from the field: both from August Slosse, a board member of the University Foundation and by organising a trip to visit fellows in Boston and Cambridge in January 1924.

48 *Annual Report* 1920, 12.

49 ABAEF, BGF 1923-1924, file ‘Colette Germaine Gr. Fe. 1923-1924’, Samuel S. Seward to Perrin C. Galpin, 12 February 1923, Stanford.

50 ABAEF, box ‘Minutes of Meeting 1919 to 1922; Choice Belgian Fellows 1924 to 1936’ (hereafter

CBF 1924-1936), Shaler to Jean Willems, 21 April 1922, Brussels.

51 ABAEF, CBF 1924-1936, Ivan Lambrette to Galpin, 26 December 1923.

Galpin was not completely satisfied with the results from his field trip because he could not unequivocally confirm that the right fellows had been selected. Many of the fellows and their professors showed very promising results. The fellow R.R. Leclercq for example, performed ‘uniformly excellent’, all the more so because he mixed very well with the American students. Albert Lecron, an engineer from Ghent who studied at Harvard, was ‘not a success’, as Galpin understated his case. He passed only two out of his six courses, and had not done laboratory work or written any reports, as he should have done – moreover his English had not been sufficiently good. Galpin spoke to Lecron and sanctioned him: should his results not improve, he would be removed from the Mechanical Engineering Department since he was ‘obviously wasting his time and the Foundation’s money’.<sup>52</sup>

Such a waste of money was deeply regretted by Galpin. According to him this had been a consequence of uninformed selection of fellows. This impression was reinforced by the fact that the BAEF’s Nordic counterpart, the Scandinavian-American Foundation had been able to send ‘uniformly excellent’ men, according to the chairman of the MIT Committee on Graduate Fellowships.<sup>53</sup> Galpin also gathered advice from American specialists. The Harvard dean, Haskins, suggested that the Foundation improved its selection procedure, by appointing visiting professors or BAEF alumni in the selection committee.<sup>54</sup>

Both the fellowships and the procedure to select fellows should be changed, according to Galpin. He proposed a new type of fellowship that should benefit scientists who had already progressed a little further in their careers than the graduate fellows. These fellows were older and already had some experience and track record, which should make the right selection easier. Of course these fellows would still be obliged to report to ‘show that they have made good use of their time and money in this country’.<sup>55</sup> These were the advanced fellowships that were installed from 1924 onwards. In the selection procedure Galpin followed Haskins: he proposed a preliminary selection committee that should be composed of ‘men who know about American institutions’ and some of the ‘better former Belgian fellows’.<sup>56</sup> Backed by Hoover and other American members, Galpin wanted the BAEF to use ‘what influence it can to get only the best men’.<sup>57</sup>

The BAEF wanted a greater say in the selection of fellows than they had had up until then. In the existing procedure it was the University Foundation that carried the most weight in this. Given the ideologically divided character

52 *Ibid.*, Memorandum (‘Trip to Boston and Cambridge January 15 and 16, 1924’) Perrin C. Galpin, ‘New York, 17 January 1924’ (hereafter Memorandum).

53 *Ibid.*, Memorandum.

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*, Galpin to August Slosse, New York, 15 February 1924.

57 *Ibid.*, Memorandum.



of the Belgian academic landscape, with two state universities in Liege and Ghent, one Catholic university in Leuven and a liberal freethinking university in Brussels, Francqui *cum suis* had chosen for the decentralised, university-oriented organisation of the University Foundation – a structure that would later be taken over by the FNRS. This implied that much power was given to the four Belgian universities, but in practice it was given to its chancellors, who were also *ex officio* members of the board of the University Foundation. They judged the applications and drew up a ranking of the candidates who had applied. Galpin and the BAEF deemed the chancellors unfit to perform the task of selection however. They remained in office too short a time to build up continuity in the selection committee and they did not apply the right standards. For example, they gave preference to engineers and medical men too easily. Moreover, the chancellors rewarded the wrong qualities: they preferred those with the best academic results and did not pay sufficient attention to character and presentability – characteristics the BAEF deemed necessary.<sup>58</sup>

What then, would a better selector look like? According to the BAEF, former fellows would be best to pick future fellows – those who had been in America and had been accustomed to American life and were well versed into the ambitions of the BAEF itself. Therefore alumni would be the BAEF's best bet to ensure that the right fellows were chosen, a belief which was shared by other travel fellowship foundations.<sup>59</sup> For much the same reasons, Galpin did not want the new advanced fellows to be elected by their respective universities, because then the BAEF could not be sure of the 'quality and the seriousness of purpose and the representativeness of each man'.<sup>60</sup>

The composition of the selection committee and the criteria used to select fellows were subject of an ongoing discussion. In 1929 a new committee was installed, consisting of eight members – two American representatives of the BAEF and six Belgians, all of whom had visited the United States with funding from the BAEF. As early as 1931 the chancellors were again added to the committee. In 1936 the structure was renewed once more, with a committee consisting of chancellors, representatives of the University Foundation and the BAEF and three alumni. All these changes in committee members reflect a conflict of interest between the two foundations. The Belgian-run University Foundation wanted to promote science to rebuild

58 *Ibid.*, Galpin to Shaler, 6 January 1924, Choice Belgian Fellows 1924 to 1936.

59 *Ibid.*, Galpin to the Fondation Universitaire, New York, 15 September 1924'. See for instance, on the selection procedure of the Kahn Foundation: Whitney Walton, 'Des enseignantes en voyage:

Les rapports des boursières Albert Kahn sur la France et les États-Unis, 1898-1930', in: Nicolas Bourguinat (ed.), *Le Voyage au féminin: Perspectives historiques et littéraires (xviii-xxe siècles)* (Strasbourg 2008) 131-149, 134.

60 ABAEF, CBF 1924-1936, Memorandum.

Belgium, as Francqui had envisioned at its inception. Logically, its selectors had a predilection for medical men and engineers, and looked at academic qualities first, although they also took ‘gentlemen’s values’ into account.<sup>61</sup> On Hoover’s side, of course BAEF did not fully oppose these ambitions, but added another – the furtherance of America’s interest by fostering good relations between Belgium and America.<sup>62</sup>

The BAEF and the University Foundation took an interest in the composition of the fellowship committee because it would profoundly influence which fellows were selected. A Belgian equilibrium therefore, was carefully maintained in each of the fellowship committees. Discussing the selectors and their method of selection at the same time meant discussing what a good fellow was. But what then, was a good fellow?

### Shaping minds and bodies

The persona of the scientist, as it was propagated by the BAEF through its choice of fellows, entailed both mental and physical qualities. The first concerned what can be qualified as virtues, skills as well as merits – both scholarly and more worldly qualities were in demand. As the yearly call for fellowships read, a candidate should have ‘an unquestioned intellectual capacity’. However, this was not enough for the BAEF: fellows had to ‘give proof of character and education’ too. Furthermore, candidates needed to speak English. For this, exams were organised for the prospective fellows. In the 1920s these exams were conducted by the Brussels BAEF official Millard Shaler. His reports not only marked the command of English, but also assessed the background, prospects and personality of the candidates. Shaler’s judgements ranged from ‘not especially sympathetic’ to a ‘very good personality’, and seem to have been important to the BAEF, since Galpin was very appreciative of them.<sup>63</sup> Apparently, fellows needed to have ‘personality’ and had to display it in front of a BAEF official. What this personality consisted of was never clearly defined, but it seems to have been connected to some of the qualities already mentioned above. Fellows needed to be ‘representative’; they had to be presentable. What was needed of the fellows was that they knew how to ‘play the game in America’. If they did not, they might injure the reputation of both the Foundation and Belgium.<sup>64</sup> Such qualities were important to the BAEF and in combination they seem to shape a profile of the ideal fellow – that of the ambassador.

61 Bertrams, ‘The Domestic Uses’, 338.

62 *Ibid.*, 334.

63 ABAEF, Box ‘Belgian Fellows 1929-30 B-L’, folder ‘Belgian Fellows 1929-30 General’, Galpin to C.R.B.E.F., 1 May 1929, New York; Box ‘Belgian

Fellows 1928-29 H-Z’, folder ‘Belgian Fellows General 1928-29’.

64 ABAEF, CBF 1924-1936, Galpin to Shaler, 6 January 1924, New York.



The profile of the ambassador was in line with the BAEF's background and mission. For an important part of their mission – 'stimulating and perpetuating the friendly relations between Belgium and the United States' – the fellows had to be presentable. That is why they were advised 'to take dinner jackets (smoking)' to America.<sup>65</sup> In the United States the Belgians should give a favourable impression of their home country. In their letters of recommendation professors often referred to exactly this capability of their pupils: they would 'do honour to Belgium in America'.<sup>66</sup> The Liège biochemist Henri Fredericq stressed that he had already been to America as a BAEF visiting professor and thus knew what it took for fellows to represent their country. He recommended his student Marcel Florkin because he possessed 'to the highest degree all those qualities which arouse on the other side of the Atlantic a favorable opinion of the Belgian youth of our universities'.<sup>67</sup> The representative role of the fellow did not cease upon leaving America. When back in Belgium the fellow was meant to be an ambassador for the United States; he had to 'understand' America and then 'interpret it to his countrymen'.<sup>68</sup>

The BAEF made the demands of 'character' and 'personality' and ambassadorship primarily from a political perspective – the friendship between the two countries. While these demands were not of a 'purely scientific' nature, it did not mean that Belgian scholars and scientists did not have to meet them. On the contrary, in an academic landscape where fundability became an asset, scientists had to meet the funding bodies' expectations, how contingent on the circumstances these might seem. The fact that applicants who had fulfilled any kind of military service during the First World War received a positive note in the files of the BAEF was an example of this type of contingency, namely the BAEF's wartime origins. Military service in the First World War thus could enhance a candidate's chances to obtain funding.

One of the fellows whose wartime effort was 'noted' was Marie-Thérèse Meuleman, who had served as an army nurse and was decorated for her work. Meuleman was considered a very fundable fellow, who coupled being 'very intelligent' with – and this was certainly not a gender neutral category – her 'pleasant personality'.<sup>69</sup> Yet as a woman she was member of a small minority of fellows. Of the 471 BAEF fellows from all categories between 1920 and 1940, there were only 50 women, which is about eleven percent. This is considerably

65 ABAEF, BGF 1924-1925, General Information.

68 ABAEF, BGF 1924-1925, General Information.

66 ABAEF, BGF 1926-1927, file 'Delrue Georges. Belgian Fellow 1926-1927'.

69 ABAEF, BGF 1925-1926, file 'Meuleman, Marie-Thérèse'.

67 ABAEF, box 'Regular and Advanced Fellows 1928-1929', file 'Florkin, Marcel', Henri Fredericq to Shaler, 2 February 1928, Liège.

lower than the female share of university graduates, seventeen percent, throughout the same period.<sup>70</sup> This distortion was reflected in the way fellows were generically referred to as ‘men’, and in the singular as ‘man’. For the Belgian academics involved in the selection process, gender thus seemed to be a non-issue, since fellows were automatically considered to be male. This attitude reproduced and reinforced the existing, masculine Belgian academic culture.

Among the American BAEF staff though, there seemed to be a certain awareness of the need to stimulate the participation of women. The yearly call addressed ‘young men and women’ and in some selection procedures gender even seems to have been an advantage: Shaler was extra supportive of Elisabeth Pissoot’s application ‘in view of the fact that she is the only woman candidate this year’, who was ‘much superior’ to many of the men he had examined.<sup>71</sup> Female fellows such as Pissoot were looked after more than their male colleagues. Extra arrangements were made for the boat trip, where the women could share a cabin only with other women, and usually housing was arranged in advance. This extra care could not begin to even the numbers of men and women, rather it points to the problems scientific travelling involved for women. In the 1920s and 1930s crossing the ocean unchaperoned was rather unusual for women, let alone remaining there for three months or even a year. Building a scientific career was not easy for women and transatlantic travel or obtaining of funding for it, did not make that any easier. Even when female fellows were confronted with restrictions because they were women – not being allowed to become ‘House Officer’ of a hospital, for instance – gender was not an issue in their reports. Women adapted their discourse to the implicitly masculine model of being a travelling scientist that the BAEF developed. They inscribed themselves in a ‘sexless’ and seemingly disembodied discourse.<sup>72</sup>


Bodies however, did matter to the BAEF. Bodily fitness even was an explicit requirement for the fellows. Every applicant had to be ‘in good health’ as the call for fellows read in the first year of its existence.<sup>73</sup> Why this was so important was illustrated by the case of the aforementioned Ivan Lambrette who studied at the Mellon Institute. He suffered from diabetes and his stay in Pittsburgh had not been a success: he had not been able to perform the

70 Compare the numbers by Kenneth Bertrams that are considerably lower: 6.57%. Probably this is caused by not taking into account a large number of Child Health Teachers that went to America as a group in the early 1920s. Bertrams, ‘The Domestic Uses’, 338.

71 ABAEF, BGF 1923-1924, file: ‘Pissoot Elizabeth’, Report by Shaler, 21 March 1923.

72 Kaat Wils and Pieter Huistra, ‘Belgian Women Scientists and their Travels during the Interwar Years’, paper presented at *Heroic Journeys?: Networks of Women Scientists in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*. Royal Academy, Brussels, 16 June 2015.

73 *Annual Report 1920*, 33.



**C.R.B. Educational Foundation, Inc.**  
42, Broadway, NEW-YORK, N.Y.

C.R.B. Fellowships for American Universities  
192 -192

**Please answer all Questions**

- Name (family) .. *Meuleman*
- First names .. *Marie-Thérèse, Thérèse, Eugénie*
- Permanent address in Belgium .. *23, avenue Auguste Rodin, Bruxelles*
- Date of birth .. *May 3, 1894* 5. Place of birth .. *Brussels*
- Are you a native born or a naturalized Belgian citizen? .. *I am a native born Belgian*
- Name and address of father or nearest relative .. *Colonel en retraite, Meuleman, 23, avenue Auguste Rodin, Bruxelles*
- Occupation of father .. *Retired officer*
- Single, married, widowed, divorced? .. *Single*  
If married, will your wife receive ample support from funds in addition to the Fellowship? \_\_\_\_\_  
Will she accompany you to America? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you any constitutional disorder or physical defects? .. *No, I am enjoying a very good health*  
Explain .. *good health*
- Have you been physically examined as to your general condition and particularly as to the condition of your teeth? .. *No*  
Have you arranged to correct, if possible any defects before leaving Belgium? .. *Yes, my teeth will be attended to*
- At what intermediate school did you prepare for your university or technical school? .. *Holy Trinity Convent, Brussels and Brancly (Kent)*
- Name your principal subjects of study and give number of years of intermediate school work devoted to each subject.

Name of Study	Years	Name of Study	Years
<i>Literature</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Chemistry, Physics</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>English, French, German</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Physiology</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Latin</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Drawing, Bookwork</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Physical sciences</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Geography, History</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>6</i>

▲  
The pre-printed application form of Marie-Thérèse Meuleman, fellow in 1925-1926: the BAEF standardized its application procedures.

Brussels, ABAEF, box 'Belgian Graduate Fellows 1925-26', file 'Meulemans, Marie-Thérèse'.

Photo Pieter Huistra.

academic work he had planned. Had not the Mellon Institute aided him, Lambrette's 'financial position would have been extremely bad' due to health care costs. He urged the BAEF to prevent this from happening in the future: 'My own experience urges me to suggest that *on no account* be a Fellow admitted whose health is not absolutely good.'<sup>74</sup>

Lambrette's recommendation led Galpin to inquire of his colleagues in Brussels about the 'physical condition' of the fellows.<sup>75</sup> Lambrette had been examined before he left. At that time he was in fairly good shape and the physician of the University Foundation considered the fellowship possibly advantageous for the diabetic Lambrette because of the advanced state of American medical science.<sup>76</sup> All parties agreed that a case such as Lambrette's should not occur again and the BAEF reasserted its health policy: every fellow had to undergo a medical examination 'as if he were an applicant for life insurance'.<sup>77</sup> As a result, in every fellow's file there are several doctors' certificates about the patient's vaccinations, eyesight, teeth and general health. Delrue's doctor for example declared that his excellent state of health 'allows him to study in America'.<sup>78</sup> At least from 1934 onwards the BAEF employed former fellow and medical doctor Pierre Depage to assess whether a candidate possessed the physical fitness that was required for a year's study in the United States.<sup>79</sup> Apparently, it was someone who had been in America who was best able to assess the physical fitness needed for a fellowship.

Clearly, the regulations about medical examinations were due to financial considerations and American immigration laws as much as they were by the chances of scientific success for the fellows. Again, the motivation seems of less importance than the demand itself: the BAEF demanded its fellows that they were mentally as well as physically fit.

### Performing personae

It is difficult to assess whether the creation of this new group of academics with 'American experience' aroused resistance or irritation within universities where attachment to European traditions of teaching and to older repertoires of being a scientist was certainly strong. Obviously, the BAEF and its archives are not the place to look for traces of criticism, as they produced mainly positive accounts. Literature on science and academia in Belgium during the Interwar Years however, does not give any indications in this direction

74 ABAEF, CBF 1924-1936, Lambrette to Galpin, 26 December 1922, Pittsburgh.

75 *Ibid.*, Galpin to C.R.B., 4 June 1924, New York.

76 *Ibid.*, E. Willems to Shaler and W.H. Tuck, 23 June 1924, Brussels.

77 ABAEF, BGF 1924-1925, General Information.

78 ABAEF, BGF 1926-1927, file 'Delrue Georges. Belgian Fellow 1926-1927'.

79 *Annual Report 1934*, 9.

either.<sup>80</sup> Especially in the sciences, an American academic experience seems to have been valued highly without reserve. In the travel reports of fellows from the humanities and the social sciences reference was sometimes made to the commonly shared idea that American higher education was mostly useful to students in science, medicine and engineering. In 1925 anthropologist Frans Olbrechts, who studied two years with Franz Boas in New York, insisted on refuting this idea in his report: the added value of research work at an American university was as important for scholars in fields such as philosophy, education or literature, he argued.<sup>81</sup> Others referred to Hoover's ideals of fostering mutual understanding, which might find more fertile ground among students from the humanities than among those from the natural sciences.<sup>82</sup> Even while anti-American cultural criticism was probably more developed among scholars from the humanities, there are signs that suggest that the American university was esteemed even by those who were very ambivalent in their overall judgment about the United States.<sup>83</sup>

Funding bodies such as the BAEF changed scientific practice and installed new demands scientists had to meet, such as 'having been funded' or – specifically in the case of the BAEF – 'having travelled'. To obtain the fellowships from the BAEF young scientists needed to master all kinds of genres that were quite new in the Interwar Period – the grant application and the progress report for example. Also, older genres such as the letter of recommendation were now used in a new context. These forms of writing point towards the origin of a new regime of accountability in which scientists answer to funding bodies. Of course, careers extend to both ends of the regime: scientists start out as prospective fellows and end up as selectors, or go from applicant to recommender. The BAEF's preference for its own alumni facilitated the actual development of such a regime.

80 Sofie Onghena, 'The Survival of 19th-Century Scientific Optimism: The Public Discourse on Science in Belgium in the Aftermath of the Great War (ca. 1919-1930)', *Centaurus* 53:4 (2011) 280-305.

81 ABAEF, PR 1925-1926, 'Preliminary Report Frans Olbrechts'.

82 ABAEF *Final Reports of Belgian Fellows in America 1922-1923*, 'Final report Germaine Collette'. Germaine Collette was however also critical of the system of strict supervision of each student, which might hinder the development of 'independence of taste and judgment as our system does'.


83 See for instance the essays and novels on the United States of former BAEF-fellow Jan Albert Goris/Marnix Gijzen: Marnix Gijzen, *Le Coeur des Etats-Unis*, translated by Stéphanie Chandler (Courtrai 1933) 283-296. On the positive depiction of American universities in Gijzen's novels, see H. Bekkering, 'De twee gezichten van Marnix Gijzen', in: Klaas van Berkel (ed.), *Amerika in Europese ogen. Facetten van de Europese beeldvorming van het moderne Amerika* (The Hague 1990) 171-180, 176. On a similar note by the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga: Klaas van Berkel, 'De amerikanisering van de Europese universiteit. Het begin van de discussie in Nederland (1900-1940)', in: *ibid.*, 135-160, 142.

These instances of contact between the BAEF and its fellows – writing a report, filing an application or giving an interview to the selection committee – were performances. At these moments the fellows(-to-be) had to answer to what the BAEF demanded of them. They had to perform the ambassador-scientist or the fit scientist. The dry application forms, the very serious research proposals and especially the standardised reports that testified to an obligatory gratitude and a scripted open-mindedness, show that the fellows complied with the BAEF's demands. What this change in scientific behaviour indicates is what Peter Burke has called the 'occasional' nature of performances: scientists had to behave differently in different situations – they had to perform different personae.<sup>84</sup> In the context of the BAEF age-old repertoires of scientific identity such as the sick scientist or the absent-minded professor could not be called upon, but this did not mean that these old registers would now be cut off entirely. Farewell dinners or laudatory speeches offered occasions where such personae could be performed. This implies that personae were not so much replaced, but rather that the available repertoire was extended.


It is equally important – and obvious – that the source material at the disposal of the historian researching scientific personae is of decisive significance. Obituaries, laudations or book introductions create and show other personae than progress reports. It is not constructive to consider one of the performances highlighted by these sources as in some way more 'real' than others. Presenting oneself in front of an interview committee of a funding body is not some kind of 'trick' that is far removed from who the scientist really is. Instead of trying to distinguish real from fake, it would be better, as Burke suggests, to use an axis running from 'strong' ('rituals and festivals') to 'weak' performances ('everyday life').<sup>85</sup> The research into the history of scientific personae has a predilection for 'strong' performances with clear frames such as both the aforementioned application procedures and commemorative practices. In everyday scientific work performances are probably much weaker in the sense that they are less scripted. Again, this does not imply that the demands by the BAEF were fruitless and that they did not change what being a scientist entails. Nor did the demands of funding bodies dominate every aspect of scientific practice or scientists' identities. Rather, the number of occasions on which funding bodies played a significant role did increase, thereby deliberately shaping scientific personae.

84 Peter Burke, 'Performing History: The Importance of Occasions', *Rethinking History* 9:1 (2005) 35-52.

85 Burke, 'Performing History', 43.



**Pieter Huistra** is assistant professor of Theory of History at Utrecht University. His research covers the history of science in its broadest meaning (as in the German *Wissenschaft* or the Dutch *wetenschap*), ranging from the humanities to the biomedical and natural sciences. At the moment, his research interest goes out to funding bodies and their role in twentieth-century science. He aims to investigate how these funding bodies played a pivotal role in the changing practices and repertoires of science and scientists. Email: [p.a.huistra@uu.nl](mailto:p.a.huistra@uu.nl).



**Kaat Wils** is professor of Cultural History since 1750 at KU Leuven. Her research deals with the modern history of the humanities and the biomedical sciences, gender history and history education. She is co-supervisor of the international project SPICE – Scientific Personae in Cultural Encounters in Twentieth Century Europe, financed by the Swedish Wallenberg Foundation. The research which is presented in this article, is part of this project. Email: [kaat.wils@kuleuven.be](mailto:kaat.wils@kuleuven.be).